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A SECOND LETTER

TO THE

ELECTORS OF IRELAND,

ON THE

PROJECTED MEASURE

OF AN

UNION.

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BY A FREEHOLDER.

" What if Cæſar proudly aims to lord it univerſal o'er the World,
" Shall the World *tamely* ſtoop to Cæſar's Footſtool."

MASON's CARACTACUS.

DUBLIN:
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1799.

TO THE

ELECTORS OF IRELAND.

SINCE I laſt addreſſed you, happy am I to find ſome ſymptoms of national regard, of revived public ſpirit animating your conduct. For a conſiderable time, indeed, (even ſince the meaſure of an Union has been avowed by Adminiſtration) you appeared totally loſt to all reflection; your rational faculties ſeemed ſuſpended and overſhadowed by the hand of death: But at length ſome ſparks of patriotic feeling, emanating from that great body, your metropolis, have warmed you. The county of Dublin,

lin, heated by the colluſion, caught the glorious flame, which, warming and animating the mighty maſs, will, I truſt, *quickly* pervade and vivify the whole kingdom, even down to its remoteſt extremity.

To what latent cauſe, then, am I to attribute your unaccountable ſupineneſs? Is it to deſpair, timidity, or apathy? The former it cannot be, whenever the voice of the people interpoſed; their interference has had the deſired efficacy and ſucceſs. No Government, (whatever their inclination might be) would venture to carry into effect a meaſure decidedly hoſtile to the expreſs ſentiments of the nation; therefore, you have no reaſon to ſuppoſe your exertions in this *vital* cauſe of your country would be either inoperative or unſucceſsful; neither are there any adequate grounds for deſpondency, reſulting from the preſumed incurable depravity of the maſs of the people; for notwithſtanding the horrid and deplorable Rebellion, ſecurity and peace are progreſſivelyreturning, and, conſidering the violence and relentleſs fury of the ſtorm, tranquility and repoſe are rapidly reviving; and though the tempeſt may have ſubſided, agitated waves do not *at once* reſume their ſere-

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nity and ſtillneſs; the ſwell of the ſea continues after the hurricane; but as a man inebriated only by vapours, ſoon recovers in the open air, ſo a nation diſturbed into phrenzy, without an adequate and permanent cauſe, will return to its ſenſes, when a little pauſe has cooled it into reflection. Timidity it cannot be; it is not prohibited, nor can it be illegal to declare your honeſt and manly ſentiments on public topics, in which you muſt have ſo great, awful and reſponſible an intereſt; nor can it be deemed a deviation from your duty to inſtruct your Repreſentatives, on ſuch momentous occaſions, and breath through that conſtitutional organ your genuine and unbiaſſed opinions. Your ſilence then muſt be imputable to apathy and indolence, that bane of our exiſtence; yet confident that your inertneſs has been merely a temporary diſorder, and that your condition is not hopeleſs, I ſhall requeſt your attention to a few obſervations my feelings on this momentous ſubject naturally ſuggeſt:

Criminal neutrality and indifference to public concerns has by no means been your general characteriſtic; although popular vigilance has ſlumbered for a time, it is, I truſt, by no means *dead*, you have always evinced a laudable promptitude

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in obtaining your rights; as Volunteers, you were active in the ſervice of your country—as Yeomen, indefatigable. Shall it then be ſaid, ſuch is the mutability and unſteadineſs of your national character, that though zealous and ardent in procuring independence, you were equally lukewarm and inſenſible in the renunciation of them? The moment you had erected a temple to liberty, you idly and ſtupidly ſaw the edifice openly undermining and rudely aſſailed; but I ſtill hope you are not prepared, without an effort on your part to abdicate that freedom, and relinquiſh that glory, which has ſo much improved your condition and advanced your proſperity.

The year 1782 was the ſplendid and auſpicious period for Ireland; from that æra, as from a gaol, ſhe ſtarted forward, and has run a rapid race of proſperity and ſucceſs. And though it is often *inſultingly* aſſerted, that as an Union was ſerviceable to Scotland, ſo it will be to Ireland, I muſt poſitively deny the remoteſt ſimilitude to exiſt between the condition of the two countries. The former was benefited by an Union, principally from the circumſtances of being relieved from feudal fetters, which palſied the nerves of induſtry; and it benefited that kingdom by ſeparating chieftains from their

their clans, all of whom were petty deſpots, and their adherents ſlaves; it was not ſo much from any ſalutary intrinſic qualities the cement poſſeſſed, as from the ſeaſonable and opportune moment the remedy was adminiſtered. Scotland had not a Parliament repreſenting the property and talent of the land, but merely a confuſed mockery of repreſentation, compoſed of ariſtocratic Barons, Eccleſiaſtics, and a few Repreſentatives, who conſtituted *one* Parliament, under the immediate influence of the Lords of Articles, who could propoſe a negative on all queſtions *before* debate; ſo that there appears no reſemblance or analogy between the condition of the two countries; and what might be the *balm of Scotland*, would be the *bane of Ireland*. I muſt even doubt whether the annexation of the kingdoms was beneficial to Scotland; the progreſs of revolving time would naturally have improved her ſituation, like other countries of Europe; and certainly her ſpecie was very much diminiſhed after the Union, and ſhe was obliged to have recourſe to *ſmall notes* as ſubſtitutes for caſh, long before the banks here *wiſely* ſuſpended payment in gold. There was a period in Iriſh hiſtory when ſuch a project ſhould have received the cordial co-operation and warmeſt ſupport of every Iriſhman, but England *then* had benefits to

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grant, and you wanted commerce and freedom; but *now* when ſhe has no conceſſions to beſtow, equivalent to the ſacrifices you muſt make, when *free trade* and *free conſtitution* are the poles which ſupport your elevated ſyſtem of legiſlation, can you, without indignation, hear ſuch an analogy ſuggeſted?

You will, no doubt, be told, and it ſeems to be confidently aſſerted, that the quarter from whence oppoſition to this *menacing* and *inflaming* meaſure originates, is influenced by local ties and partial conſiderations. Can you, my Countrymen, believe ſuch rank and monſtrous poſitions? Are the city and county of Dublin ſo degraded in your eſtimation, as to be ſuppoſed for a moment capable of ſuch ſelfiſh and paltry conduct, as being actuated by intereſts ſeparate and diſtinct from the general advancement and proſperity of the kingdom? Surely their uniform conduct and principles ſhould be the beſt refutation of ſuch groſs and unfounded charges. The ſtream of calumny which may waſh away the periſhable fabrick of other characters, paſſes without injury by the adamant of their's. Could an Union *in any ſhape* ſerve the general intereſts of Ireland, from them I am confident it would receive the fulleſt

fulleſt and moſt unequivocal ſupport. *Their object is Ireland, their ambition independence.*——But convinced as they are, the principle itſelf of incorporation is not receivable; they will not, therefore, proſtrate their freedom at the altar of Britiſh aggrandizement, nor exchange *certain* and *valuable* benefits for poſſible and eventual advantages, attainable without ſuch an eternal ſurrender; it ſhould be the laſt of remedies, *cuncta prius tentanda*; all gentler methods ſhould be tried before we have recourſe to ſo violent an operation.

As to the conduct of your metropolis, advert for a moment to the late Rebellion, and ſee how their actions will ſpeak for them on that unhappy occaſion. Did ſelfiſh motives appear then to operate upon them, when they made an offer of their ſervices to Government, as yeomanry, to repair to *any* part of the kingdom where their preſence might be moſt ſerviceable, and leave their native city in a great degree defenceleſs, although on many accounts it ſhould be the primary object of their ſolicitude, attention and protection, (as the ſeat of government, the principal depoſitary of arms, ammunition and treaſure, and alſo the ſanctuary of their families, who in the event might be expoſed to brutal violence and ruffian force? Try

their conduct by this teſt, and judge if ſelfiſhneſs was the axis on which it turned. I only hope the reſt of the kingdom may ſhew themſelves equally diſintereſted, and not leave grounds for malice to ſuggeſt they may feel a malignant gratification in injuring Dublin, even without ſerving themſelves. Similar reflections have been laviſhed on the Bar, equally falſe and illiberal. By the unerring ſtandard of experience let it be tried, and it will be found faithful; be weighed, and it will be found ſufficient. When it was propoſed in Parliament, that their Catholic Brethren ſhould be admiſſible to the Iriſh Bar, did there appear againſt the meaſure, any petition, any remonſtrance, any ſelfiſh oppoſition from that quarter. No; the profeſſion at once heartily embraced them as denizens of their boſom, received and careſſed them, ſhewed them examples of liberal emulation, without envy, ambition, without jealouſy or animoſity. Although the profeſſion was before conſidered ſufficiently full, and in the event of the ſtream of buſineſs, might, in a conſiderable degree, take a contrary courſe, and if the aſſertion be well founded, that commercial benefits would ariſe to this country from a conſolidation of the legiſlatures, ſurely the bar (if actuated by ſelfiſh and perſonal motives) ought to write for the adoption of it, as their buſineſs would proportionably

proportionably increaſe; with reſpect to Barriſters ſitting in the houſe of Commons, I very much doubt that it would be an improvement of the conſtitution, that its doors ſhould be ſhut againſt them, ſhould that be the caſe the profeſſion would much degenerate; men of family and fortune, (the beſt ſecurities againſt mean actions) would no longer become members of it, it would ſink into a courſe of low craft, ſordid chicanery, and no longer a liberal avocation, but a mechanical diſreputable purſuit; the Houſe of Commons would loſe ſome of its ableſt and moſt ornamental members, whoſe talents have irradiated and ſhed a luſtre on the aſſembly.

You have been told that an Union will produce domeſtic tranquility, ſuppoſing for a moment it might do ſo, be aſſured any repoſe reſulting from ſo inſidious a meaſure, would not be permanent, it might create a temporary and deluſive calm, more formidable than the tempeſt which ſo furiouſly raged, but has now nearly ſubſided; the peace and ſecurity of the country is every day increaſing, the horrid ſanguinary howl of the ſavage in ſoftening into the ſong of peace. Civilization and the ſuperintending care of a liberal gentry will in courſe of a little time introduce ideas of ſafety, ſocial intercourſe

courſe will gradually ſpring up and produce virtues to adorn and acquirements to enrich our nature, and ultimately eſtabliſh tranquility on a rock of peace.

On the contrary the ſtrong arm of a military government might for a time ſilence the murmurs of irritated people, but their indignation, confined for a time, would burſt forth with encreaſed force and augmented violence.

Mr. Spencer, with true patriotiſm, has ſhewn clearly (at leaſt to my humble capacity) and proved to demonſtration, (indeed I muſt ſay of him,

Quid virtus & quid ſapientia poſſit,
Utile propoſuit nobis exemplar,)

That an Union was not a meaſure ſuggeſted as a ſpecific for our late unhappy diſorders, but a favourite project long in the contemplation of the Britiſh miniſter---if beneficial to Ireland, why not called for by the Iriſh parliament or the Iriſh people long ago; it is England ſeeks it, and not Ireland—ſhe is now taking an ungenerous advantage of our calamities to revoke her former conceſſions---how terrible the ſenſation, when the hand that ſhould be

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ſtretched out to ſave us---attempts to lodge the dagger in our breaſts----but by unanimity we may yet be ſaved.

Seize then, my friends and countrymen, the golden, glorious opportunity, catch that current which taken at the flow, may yet lead on to good fortune. Let every county, city and borough in the kingdom proteſt againſt this invaſion of their rights, and with one voice ſpeak out promptly and deciſively---if you do not *immediately* do ſo, your independence is gone FOREVER, you may in vain lament with the benevolent TITUS, you have *loſt a day*;---let there be no heart ſo cold, no ſoul ſo languid and oppreſſed with its own dull weight, as not to be rouſed by ſuch a powerful impulſe.

A FREEHOLDER.

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